



EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 09 – 02

TASK FORCE ON DISPROPORTIONALITY IN CHILD WELFARE

Oregon families must be treated with equal respect and dignity, especially when receiving services from Oregon's child welfare system. For years, state agencies have worked independently to reduce disparity in services for minorities and to develop culturally competent and language-specific services for clients.

National studies have shown that children of color are not abused at higher rates than white children. Nevertheless, in Oregon, African-American and Native American children remain over-represented in the child welfare foster care system, as compared to the percentage of the population of African-American and Native American children in Oregon. Other children of color, such as Asian-American and Hispanic children, are under-represented when compared to the populations of those children in the state.

“Disproportionality” within the child welfare system refers to the difference in the percentage of children of a certain racial or ethnic group in the state as compared to the percentage of the children of the same group in the child welfare system.

“Disparity” within the child welfare system means unequal treatment when comparing a racial or ethnic minority to a non-minority. National research shows that children of color in foster care and their families are treated differently from – and often not as well as – white children and their families in the system. Disparate treatment can happen at many steps along the decision-making process within the child welfare system including reporting, investigation, substantiation and foster care placement.

Both national and local child welfare agencies support the need for researching the causes of disproportionality and implementing effective services to reduce disproportionality in the child welfare system. Although this is a national issue, very little has been done to effectively reduce disproportionate rates of children of color in foster care nationally.

The time has come for Oregon to develop a statewide, integrated approach to reducing disparate outcomes for children and families of color and Native American children and families who are involved with the child welfare system. This Order creates a Task Force charged with engaging in a cross-systems approach with multiple agencies working together to identify the factors that contribute to disproportionality and, more importantly, to develop clear strategies for change.



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NOW THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY DIRECTED AND ORDERED:

1. The Task Force on Disproportionality in Child Welfare (Task Force) is established.

2. The Task Force shall study the reasons for the percentage difference between the number of children of certain racial or ethnic backgrounds in the child welfare foster care system and the number of those children in the general population, and shall identify specific strategies to reduce racial disparities and the disproportionality index.

3. To that end, the Task Force shall consist of a maximum of 21 members, and a majority of those members shall represent minority populations, including but not limited to the racial and ethnic groups listed in ORS 430.347. The members shall be appointed as follows:

- a. The President of the Senate shall appoint one member from among members of the Senate;
- b. The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint one member from among members of the House of Representatives;
- c. One person representing a federally recognized Oregon Indian Tribal Child Welfare program, appointed by the Director of the Department of Human Services;
- d. One person representing the State Commission on Children and Families, appointed by the Director of the Department of Human Services;
- e. One person representing the Oregon Youth Authority, appointed by the Director of the Department of Human Services;
- f. One person representing the Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee, appointed by the Director of the Department of Human Services;
- g. One person representing the Child Welfare Advisory Committee, appointed by the Director of the Department of Human Services;
- h. One person representing the law enforcement community, appointed by the Director of the Department of Human Services;



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- i. One person representing the education community, appointed by the Director of the Department of Human Services;
 - j. One person representing a community mental health program or a drug or alcohol treatment program, appointed by the Director of the Department of Human Services;
 - k. Three individuals representing the general public, at least one of whom is African-American and one of whom is Native American, appointed by the Director of the Department of Human Services;
 - l. One person representing the Oregon Judicial Department, appointed by the Director of the Department of Human Services;
 - m. One person representing either the office of Public Defense Services or the perspective of an attorney whose practice includes the representation of parents or children in the juvenile dependency system, appointed by the Director of the Department of Human Services;
 - n. One person representing the Oregon University system, appointed by the Director of the Department of Human Services;
 - o. Three individuals representing Oregon child advocacy groups, appointed by the Director of the Department of Human Services; and
 - p. Two individuals of color who are or have been foster parents to a child or to children in the child welfare foster care system, appointed by the Director of the Department of Human Services.
4. The members of the Task Force shall serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority.
5. If the Task Force requires the assistance of any other executive branch agency of the State not named in this order, then such agency shall provide that assistance to the Task Force upon request.
6. In the course of its work, the Task Force may:
- a. Set specific goals to reduce the disproportionality of minorities in the child welfare foster care system;



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- b. Study, assess and recommend strategies to enhance recruitment and retention efforts at the state and local levels to increase minority representation among foster parents, caseworkers, supervisors and managers in the child welfare system;
- c. Collect and analyze data to better assess the current and future concerns regarding disproportionality of children of color and Native American children in the child welfare system; and
- d. Address and make recommendations concerning the reduction of the disproportionality of children of color and Native American children in the child welfare foster care system.

7. In all of its work, the Task Force shall take into consideration lessons learned in other states and from Oregon promising practices that have been initiated at the local level.

8. The Task Force will elect one of its members to serve as a chairperson. The chair shall work with staff from the Children, Adults and Families Division of the Department of Human Services, to establish a work plan for the Task Force, appoint subcommittees as needed, and provide leadership and direction to the Task Force.

9. A quorum for Task Force meetings shall consist of a majority of the appointed members. The Task Force shall strive to operate by consensus; however, the Task Force may approve measures and make recommendations based on an affirmative vote of a majority of the members appointed to the Task Force.

10. With the exception of the foster parent participants, the members of the Task Force shall not be entitled to the reimbursement of expenses or to the per diem provided in ORS 292.495(2). Foster parent participants may be reimbursed for travel expenses incurred in attending Task Force business pursuant to ORS 292.495(2), subject to availability of funds.

11. The Task Force shall submit a report, which may include recommendations for legislation as appropriate, to an interim committee of the Legislative Assembly related to human services no later than October 1, 2010.



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12. This Order expires on December 31, 2010.

Done at Salem, Oregon, this 5th day of January, 2009.

Theodore R. Kulongoski
GOVERNOR

ATTEST:

Kate Brown
SECRETARY OF STATE